



# Wisconsin Ethics Commission

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**DATE:** December 6, 2016 Commission Meeting

**TO:** Members, Wisconsin Ethics Commission

**FROM:** Brian M. Bell, MPA  
Commission Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Nonpartisan Staff Policy – Adopted by Unanimous Vote

The staff of the Wisconsin Ethics Commission must be nonpartisan pursuant to WIS. STAT § 19.47(10). Political neutrality is imperative so staff can maintain the confidence of the Commission, the individuals and organizations that the Ethics Commission regulates, and the public. Therefore, all staff members are prohibited from participating in any political activity that compromises the ability of that person to discharge with neutrality, efficiency, and integrity his or her duties and obligations to the Commission.

Employees who wish to participate in any political activities shall disclose their intentions to the Administrator. If the Administrator decides an employee's involvement may reasonably compromise the employee or the Commission, the Administrator will review the situation and make a determination as to whether the involvement in the political activity is appropriate. The Administrator may also authorize employees to participate in certain activities that have a business purpose consistent with the agency's mission, that have historical significance, or are merely collateral to a prohibited political activity.

Employees are strongly encouraged to consult with the Administrator prior to any activity that may be perceived as compromising the employee's ability to objectively perform their official responsibilities.

In addition to the provisions of WIS. STAT. § 230.40, prohibited activities include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Being a candidate for any partisan office (national, state, or local).
2. Being a member of any national, state, or local political party.
3. Directly or indirectly soliciting, receiving, or making contributions to any political party or partisan candidate for public office.
4. Soliciting votes in support of or in opposition to any party or partisan candidate for public office.
5. Circulating or signing nomination papers or petitions, including recall petitions, for partisan political office.

*Wisconsin Ethics Commissioners*

Mac Davis | David R. Halbrooks | Robert Kinney | Peg Lautenschlager | Katie McCallum | Pat Strachota

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*Administrator*

Brian M. Bell, MPA

6. Serving as an agent of any political party or partisan candidate in any capacity (e.g., polling place observer, delegate, partisan poll worker, or get out the vote activities).
7. Publicly supporting or opposing a partisan candidate for public office or political party office in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature, or similar material.

### Seeking Elective Office

Any employee who wishes to run for partisan elective office must take an unpaid leave of absence effective from the time nomination papers can first be circulated, and must resign (or be terminated) if and when such nomination papers are filed.

Any employee who files a campaign registration statement to register as a candidate for partisan elective office prior to the time that nomination papers can first be circulated shall report that filing to the Administrator, who shall place the employee on unpaid leave until the nomination papers are filed or until the employee is no longer a candidate for partisan office.

In addition to avoiding partisan activities, staff should also avoid running for nonpartisan office if the Commission is the filing officer for that contest. This would put the staff member in the position of enforcing campaign finance regulations upon her or his own committee, or against potential opponents. Any employee seeking a nonpartisan office where the Commission is the filing officer is required to take an unpaid leave of absence from the time the employee files a campaign registration statement until the employee is no longer a candidate. If the employee is elected, the employee shall resign or be terminated.